The Muslim's Belief

Shaikh Muhammad as-Saleh Al-'Uthaimin

Translated by
Dr. Maneh Al-Johani

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In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Preface of Shaykh Abd al Aziz Ibn Baz

Praise belongs to Allah alone; peace and blessing on the last Prophet, his family and his Companions.

I was introduced to the valuable and concise treatise on the Muslim's belief prepared by our brother, the great scholar Shaikh Muhammad As-Saleh al-Uthaimin. I listened to it all and found that it covers the creed of the Sunnites and the mainstream majority of the Muslims in the area of the oneness of Allah, His attributes, the belief in the angels, the books and the messengers, the Day of Judgment, and in the belief in fate and the divine decree. He succeeded in collecting what the seeker of knowledge and every Muslim needs for his belief in Allah, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, the Day of Judgment, and fate. He included in his treatise useful information related to the Muslim's beliefs that are not readily available in many of the books written on these topics. May Allah reward the author, increase him in knowledge and guidance, and make this book and his other books most useful. May Allah, the Hearer and the Close, bless us and him and all our brothers and make us among those who are guiding and rightly guided to call people to Allah with sure knowledge.

Dictated by 'Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz, may Allah forgive him and shower peace and blessing on our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his Companions.

Translator's Foreword

I found this treatise of the Muslim's creed a concise and useful presentation of a very important topic. The need for this treatise, especially among non-Arabic speaking readers, cannot be overestimated. Therefore, I decided to translate it and make it accessible to English readers.

I would like to draw the attention of the readers to the following points:

• I gave the book the title THE MUSLIM'S BELIEF instead of the author's Aqidatu Ahl As Sunnah wa al Jama'ah, which may be translated as The Creed of the People of the Sunnah and Majority. I think my preference is justified by: a) The title I preferred is shorter; b) The two titles have almost the same meaning; c) The original title contains some technical terms that are not only difficult to translate, but also difficult to understand by many readers; and d) The original title may antagonize some readers who are misinformed about the true designations of the words in the original title.

• I provided, in parentheses after every Qur'anic verse, the numbers of chapters and verses quoted by the author without giving their proper reference. This I deemed useful for readers who do not know the Qur'an by heart and who would like to check these verses.

• Because the author, in most cases, quotes or paraphrases some of the prophetic traditions without indicating them to the readers, I tried, whenever I could recognize these traditions, to put them in quotations and to cite in parentheses the prophetic collections in which they are reported. In most cases, I limited myself to the collections of Bukhari and Muslim whenever the saying is quoted from them. If it is not in these two collections, I mention one or two of the other collections that contain the quoted saying.

• I provided the arrangement of the text into chapters and headlines for ease of reading and understanding. I also provided a table of contents for ease of reference.

• In translating the Qur'anic verses quoted in this treatise, I did not follow any specific translation of the Qur'an. I benefited from more than one, but followed my own preference.

It is my sincere desire and hope that this book would be of great help to those who consult it. Please include in your prayer all those who contributed to its present shape.

Dr. Maneh Hammad al-Johani

Author's Introduction

Praise be to the Lord of the universe who gives the best reward to the God-fearing and the great loss to the transgressor. I bear witness that there is no God but Allah; He has no partner and possesses real sovereignty. I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger; the seal of the prophets and the leader of the God-fearing. May Allah bless him, his family, his Companions, and those who follow them till the Day of Judgment.

Allah has sent His messenger Muhammad, peace be upon him, with the real guidance and the true religion as a mercy to mankind, as a model for those who do good, and as His argument against mankind. Through Muhammad and what was revealed to him (the Qur'an and the Prophetic sayings), Allah showed mankind all means of reforming itself and straightening its religious and mundane affairs in sound beliefs, right conduct, fine morals, and laudable manners. The Prophet, peace be upon him, "left his followers on a clear straight path, only the doomed will deviate from it"(Ibn Majah and Ahmad). His followers, the Companions, their followers, and those who followed them faithfully are the best of mankind. They established his law, upheld his way, and held fast to it as a belief and practice, a moral and manner. Thus "they are considered the party who are victorious, on the straight path, unharmed by those who are against them till the end of the world" (Bukhari and Muslim).

Thanks to Allah, we are following their footsteps and are being guided by their examples, which are supported by the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions. We are saying this only as an announcement of Allah's blessings and as a clarification of what every Muslim should believe. We pray to Allah that He may keep us and our brothers on the straight path in this life and in the hereafter. May He give us mercy, for He is the Giver.

Due to the importance of this topic and the difference of opinions about it, I want to explain briefly our creed-the belief of the Sunnites and the mainstream Muslims (Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah). This creed is the belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Day of Judgment, and fate, whether good or bad. I pray to Allah to make this effort sincere for His sake, in agreement with His wish, and useful for His people.

Chapter I

OUR CREED

Our creed is to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Day of Judgment, and Fate whether good or bad.

Belief in Allah's Lordship, Oneness, and Attributes:

• We believe in Allah's divinity; that is he is the Lord, the Creator, the Sovereign, and the Manager of all affairs.

• We believe in Allah's god ship; that is, He is the true God and every other so-called deity is false.

• We believe in His names and attributes, that is He has the most magnificent names and the sublime perfect attributes.

• We believe in His oneness in all of this, that is, He has no associate in His divinity, His God ship, His names, or His attributes. Allah says in the Qur'an: "He is the Lord of the heavens and the Earth and all that is in between them, so worship Him and be patient in His worship; do you know any equal to Him?" (19:65).

• We believe that He is "Allah there is no God but He, the Living, the Everlasting. Slumber does not seize Him, neither sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the Earth. Who is there that shall intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not encompass anything of His knowledge except what He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the Earth, the preservation of them does not burden Him; He is the High, the Great" (2:255).

• We believe that "He is Allah, there is no god but He, the Knower of the Unseen and the Visible. He is the Most Gracious, Most Merciful. He is Allah, there is no God but He, the King, the Holy One, the Source of Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Almighty, the Subduer, the Sublime. Glory be to Allah above what they associate with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. His are the most beautiful Names. All that is in the heavens and the Earth glorifies Him. He is the Almighty, the Wise" (59:22-4).

• We believe that to Him belongs the Kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth: "He creates what He pleases. He gives, to whom He wills, females, and He gives, to whom He wills, males, or He couples them, males and females; and He makes whom He wills barren. Surely, He is the Knowing, the Powerful" (42:49-50).

• We believe that "there is nothing whatever like unto Him, He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing. To Him belongs the keys of the Heavens and the Earth. He enlarges and restricts provisions to whom He wills. Surely He has knowledge of everything" (42:11-12).

• We believe that "there is no creature that moves on the Earth but its provision depends on Allah. He knows its dwelling and its resting place. All is recorded in a clear book" (11:6).

• We believe that "with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them but He. He knows what is in land and sea; not a leaf falls, but He knows it. Not a grain in the deep darkness of the Earth, not a thing green or dry but it is in a clear Book" (6 :5 9).

• We believe that "Allah alone has the knowledge of the Hour, sends down rain, and knows what is in the wombs. No soul knows what it shall earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it shall die. Surely, Allah is All-knowing, All-aware" (31:34).

• We believe that Allah speaks whatever He pleases whenever He pleases: "And Allah spoke to Moses directly" (4:164); "And when Moses came at Our appointed place, and his Lord spoke to him" (7:143); "We called to him from the right side of the Mount (Sinai), and We brought him near in communion" (19:52).

• We believe that "if the ocean became ink for the words of my Lord, the ocean would be finished before the words of my Lord came to an end" (18:109); "And if all the trees that are in the earth were pens, and the ocean (were ink), with seven oceans swelling it therefore, the words of Allah would not be exhausted. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise" (31 :27).

• We believe that Allah's words are the most truthful in conveying information, the most just in ruling, and the fairest in conversation. He said: "The word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and justice" (6:115); "And who is more truthful in his word than Allah?" (4:87).

• We believe that the Qur'an is Allah's word. He literally spoke it to Gabriel, who conveyed it to the Prophet, peace be upon him: "Say (O Muhammad) 'the Holy Spirit has brought it down from your Lord in truth'" (16:102); "Truly it is the revelation of the Lord of the world brought down upon your heart by the Faithful Spirit so that you may be one of the warners, in a clear Arabic tongue" (26:192-95).

• We believe that Allah is well above His creatures in His Person and His Attributes, because He says: "He is the High, the Great" (2:22); "He is Supreme over His servants, and He is the Wise, the All-aware" (6:18).

• We believe that He "created the Heavens and the Earth in six days, then He settled Himself on the throne; He manages everything" (10:3). His "settling on the throne" means that He is sitting in person on His throne in a way that is becoming to His majesty and greatness. Nobody except He knows exactly how He is sitting.

• We believe that He is with His creatures while He is still on His throne. He knows their conditions, hears their sayings, sees their deeds, and manages their affairs. He provides for the poor and the broken.

He gives sovereignty to whom He pleases and takes away sovereignty from whom He pleases; He exalts whom He wills and He abases whom He wills. In His hand is all good and He is powerful over everything. Whoever possesses these qualities is literally with His creatures even if He is literally above them on His throne. "There is nothing whatsoever like unto Him; He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing" (42: 11).

• We do not say, as do the Incarnationists among the Jahomites[1] and others, that Allah is living with His creatures on Earth. We consider whoever says this a non-believer or one who has strayed, for he attributed to Allah that which does not become Him of defects.

• We believe in what His Messenger told us, that He descends to the near sky before the last third of every night and says: "Who prays to Me and I

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[1] The Jahomites, known in Arabic as al-Jahmiyyah, were members of a sect named after Jahm bin Safwan (executed 128 AH). He was one of the first Muslims to deny the attrributes of Allah and to say that Allah is everywhere.

will answer his prayers? Who asks Me and I will give him? Who asks My forgiveness and I will forgive him?" (Bukhari and Muslim).[2]

• We believe that He will come on the Day of Judgment to judge among His people because He said: "No indeed! When the Earth is crushed to powder, and your Lord comes down with the angels in rows after rows, and Hell is brought out that day. On that day man will remember, but what will remembrance avail him?" (89:21-23).

• We believe that he is the Doer of what He wills.

Allah's Will: Universal and Legal:

• We believe that His will is of two kinds: a) Universal will, through which His intention is carried out. It is not necessary that what is carried out is liked by Him. This type of will means permission, as Allah said: "Had Allah willed, they would not have fought one against the other, but Allah does whatever He desires," (2:253) and "If Allah desires to lead you astray, He is your Lord" (11:34), and b) Legal will, which does not necessarily entail the execution of His desire. His will, in this case, cannot be but what He likes, as He said: "Allah wants to forgive you" (4:27).

• We believe that His universal and legal wills are part of His wisdom. Every thing He performs in the universe or requires legally from His creatures is for a good reason and according to His wisdom, whether we grasp it or not: "Is not Allah the best of Judges?" (95:8); "And who is better than Allah in judgment for a people who have firm faith" (5:50).

• We believe that Allah loves His select servants and that they love Him: "Say if you love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you" (3:31); "Allah will bring a people whom He will love and who will love Him" (5:54); "Allah loves the steadfast" (3:146); "And act justly, surely, Allah loves the just" (49:9); and "Do good; Allah loves those who do good" (5:93).

• We believe that Allah likes what He prescribed of good deeds and sayings and He dislikes what He prohibited of bad deeds and sayings: "If you disbelieve, surely Allah does not need you, yet He does not like disbelief for His servants; if you are thankful, this pleases Him"(39:7); and "But

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[2] Some versions of this hadith mention the last third of the night, while others mention the last half or after the first third. It is reported by the six major books of hadith, with the exception of that of al Nasati.

Allah disliked their marching forth. So He kept them back, and it was said to them: 'Stay with the weaklings"(9: 46).

• We believe that Allah is pleased with those who believe in Him and do good deeds: "Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him. That is for him who fears his Lord" (98:8).

• We believe that Allah is angry with those who deserve His anger among the non-believers and others: "And those who think evil thoughts of Allah, against them shall be the evil turn of fortune. Allah is angry with them" (48:6); " But whoever opens his heart to disbelief, on them is Allah's wrath and they shall have a severe punishment" (16:106).

More of Allah's Attributes:

• We believe that Allah has a glorious and dignified face: "There will remain the face of your Lord, majestic and splendid" (55:27).

• We believe that Allah has two generous hands: "No, both His hands are wide open; He spends how He pleases" (5:64); "They do not esteem Allah with the esteem that is due to Him. The whole Earth will be His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the Heavens will be rolled up in His right hand. Glory be to Him and exalted is He above that which they associate with Him" (39:67).

• We believe that Allah possesses two real eyes, because He said: "And build the ark under Our eyes as We reveal" (11:37). The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "His veil is light. Had He removed it, the sublimity of His countenance would have burnt all that His sight reached" (Muslim and Ibn Majah). The Sunnites unanimously have agreed that He has two eyes. This is supported by the Prophet's saying about the Dajjal (the anti-Christ) that "he is one-eyed and your Lord is not one-eyed" (Bukhari and Muslim).

• We believe that "vision cannot perceive Him, but He perceives all vision. He is the Incomprehensible, the All-aware" (6:103).

• We believe that the believers will see their Lord on the Day of Resurrection: "Upon that day some faces shall be radiant, gazing upon their Lord" (75:22-3).

• We believe that Allah has no equal because His Attributes are perfect: "There is nothing whatsoever like unto Him. He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing" (42:11).

• We believe that "no slumber or sleep seizes Him" (2:255), because His life is perfect and eternal.

• We believe that He does not do injustice to anybody, because His fairness is perfect.

• We believe that He is not unaware of his servants' deeds, because He has perfect supervision and comprehensive knowledge.

• We believe that He is capable of doing anything in the Heavens or in the Earth, because of His perfect knowledge and power: "Indeed His command, when He desires a thing, is only to say to it 'Be' and it is" (36: 82).

• We believe that He is free from weariness and weakness, because of His infinite power: "Surely, We created the Heavens and the Earth and all that is between them in six days, and no weariness touched Us" (50: 38).

Describing Allah by His Revelation:

• We believe in all that He assigned to Himself or what His Messenger described Him with, of names and attributes. However, we reject two concepts: 1) To say or believe that Allah's attributes are similar to those of his creatures; and 2) To say or believe that Allah's attributes are like such and such.

• We negate all what He negated about Himself or what His Messenger negated about Him. We believe that negation implies the affirmation of its perfect opposite. We do not discuss what He or His Messenger did not mention about Him.

• We believe that following this approach is a must, because what Allah affirmed or negated concerning Himself is a statement He made about Himself. He knows Himself best. His words are most just and trustful, and people cannot know everything about Him. What Allah's Messenger affirmed or negated about Him is a statement that he made about Allah. Besides knowing Allah better than anyone, he is the most truthful, sincere, and eloquent among people. Thus, in what Allah said and what His Prophet said concerning His names and attributes is the truth, knowledge, and clarification. Therefore, we have no excuse to reject or even hesitate in accepting it.

Chapter II

THE QUR'AN AND THE SUNNAH

Sources of His Attributes:

• All that we have mentioned about Allah's attributes, whether briefly or in detail and affirmatively or negatively, is based on the book of our Lord (the Qur'an) and the traditions of our Prophet. It also agrees with the practice of the previous generations of Muslims and the rightly guided scholars who came after them.

• We believe it is obligatory to take the texts of the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions conceding Allah's attributes at their face value and to interpret them in a way that is suitable to Almighty Allah. We reject the practice of those who twist the meanings of these texts and understand them in a way that was not intended by Allah and His messenger.

• We also reject the practice of those who make them devoid of their meanings as conveyed by Allah and His Messenger. Finally, we reject the approach of those who exaggerate, who gave them a physical interpretation that makes Allah similar to some of His creatures.

Free from Contradictions:

• We know for sure that what is revealed in Allah's book and in the traditions of His Messenger is the truth. It does not contain any contradiction: "Do they not ponder over the Qur'an? If it had been from other than Allah, surely they would have found in it a lot of differences" (4: 82).

• Contradictions in statements falsify them. It is impossible for there to be a contradiction in any statement revealed by Allah and said by His Messenger, peace be upon him. Whoever claims that there are contradictions in the Qur'an, the prophetic traditions, or between the two must have wicked intentions and a misguided heart. He should repent and quit his sin. If someone imagines that there are some contradictions in the Qur'an, the sayings of the Prophet, or between these two, this must be a result of his little knowledge, inadequate understanding, or lack of deep thinking. Therefore, he should seek knowledge and do his best to reflect upon matters until the truth is clear to him. If, after all of these efforts, the

truth is not clear to him, he should leave the whole matter to the One who knows it and should quit his imagination. He should say, as do those who are firmly rooted in knowledge: "We believe in it, all is from our Lord" (3:7). He must know that there are neither contradictions nor differences in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, or between the two.

Chapter III

ANGELS

Belief in Angels:

• We believe in the existence of the angels of Allah and that they are "honored servants. They do not speak before He does, and they act only by His command" (21:26). Allah created them, and they worship and obey Him. Those who are in His presence do not disdain to worship Him, nor do they weary" (21:19).

• Angels are concealed from us, so we cannot see them. Allah may show them to some of His servants. The Prophet Muhammad saw Gabriel in his real shape with six hundred wings that covered the horizons (Bukhari and Muslim). Gabriel took the form of a handsome human being who met Mary and engaged in conversation with her. He came to the Prophet while he was among his Companions in the appearance of an unknown man who did not show any trace of long travel, with very white clothes, and very black hair. He sat facing the Prophet, his knees to the Prophet's knees, peace be upon him, and his palms on the Prophet's thighs and talked with the Prophet. The Prophet later told his Companions that the man they saw was Gabriel (Bukhari and Muslim).

Angels' Functions:

• We believe that the angels are assigned certain functions. Among the angels is Gabriel, who is entrusted with revelation. He brings it down from Allah to whomever He wishes among His prophets and messengers.

• Among them is Michael, who is in charge of rain and the growth of plants; Israfil, who is in charge of blowing the horn at the time of thunder-bolting and the resurrection; the Angel of Death, who takes away people's souls at the time of death. Among the angels is the one who is in charge of mountains; and Malik, the keeper of Hell.

• Some angels are in charge of embryos in wombs, others are responsible for protecting human beings, and others are busy recording men's deeds: there are two angels for every person, "when the two angels receive (his deeds), one sitting on the right and one on the left, not a word he utters but

by him is an observer ready" (50:18). Some other angels are in charge of questioning the dead after he is placed in his last abode. Two angels come to him and ask him about his Lord, his religion, and his prophet. There "Allah confirms those who believe with the firm saying, in the present life and the hereafter, and Allah leads astray the evildoers and Allah does what He wills" (14:27).

• Some angels are in charge of the dwellers of Paradise: "The angels enter to them from every gate, saying: 'Peace be upon you for that you were patient. How excellent is your final home"' (13:24).

• The Prophet, peace be upon him, told us that "seventy thousand angels enter or pray in the populous house in heaven every day. They never come back to it as long as they live" (because their turn will never come) (Bukhari and Muslim).

Chapter IV

ALLAH'S BOOKS

Belief in Allah's Books:

• We believe that Allah revealed books to His messengers as proof against mankind and a guidance for the righteous workers. They purified and taught them wisdom by these books.

• We believe that Allah sent down a book with every messenger, because He says: "Indeed We sent down Our messengers with the clear signs, and We sent down with them the book and the balance, so that people may uphold justice" (57:25).

Books Known:

• Among the books that were revealed, we know:

> I) The Torah, which was revealed to Moses, peace be upon him. It is the greatest among the Israelites' books: "Surely, We sent down the Torah, wherein is guidance and light; by its laws the Jews have been judged by the prophets who surrendered themselves to Allah, the rabbis and the doctors of law, because they were entrusted the protection of Allah's book and were witnesses thereto" (5:44).
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> 2) The Gospel, which Allah revealed to Jesus, peace be upon him. It is a confirmation of the Torah and a complement to it: "And we gave him the Gospel, wherein is guidance and light and confirming the Torah before it, as a guidance and an admonition to the God-fearing" (5:46); "And to make lawful to you certain things that, before, were forbidden to you" (3:50).
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> 3) The Psalms, which Allah gave to David, peace be upon him.
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> 4) The Tablets of Abraham and Moses, peace be upon them.
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> 5) The Glorious Qur'an, which was revealed to His Prophet Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets. It is "a guidance to the people and clear signs of guidance and the criterion between right and wrong" (2:185).

The Qur'an Is Protected from Change:

• The Qur'an is "confirming the scripture that was before it and stands as a guardian over it." Thus, by means of the Qur'an, Allah abrogated all the previous revealed books. Allah has also guaranteed its protection from any play or mischievous distortion: "Indeed, We sent down the message and We will guard it" (15:9), for the Qur'an is a proof against mankind till the Day of Judgment.

Previous Scriptures Changed:

• The previous scriptures were meant for a limited period. Their use ended with the revelation of the Qur'an, which abrogated them and exposed their distortions and changes. That is why they were not protected from corruption. They underwent distortion, addition, and omission: "Some of the Jews pervert words from their meanings" (4:46); "So woe to those who write the Book with their hands, and then say: 'This is from Allah,' that they may sell it for a little price. So woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for their earnings" (2:79); "Say, who sent down the Book that Moses brought as a light and a guidance to people? You put it into sheets of paper showing some of them and concealing much" (6:91); "And there is a group among them who twist their tongues with the Book, that you may think it is a part of the Book but it is not part of the Book. And they say 'It is from Allah,' yet it is not from Allah, and they tell a lie against Allah and they know it. It is not for any human being to whom Allah has given the Book, the Wisdom and the Prophet hood to say to men 'Worship me instead of Allah'" (3:79); "People of the Book! Our Messenger has come to you, making clear to you many things you have been concealing of the Book and forgiving you of much. A light has come to you from Allah and a glorious Book, with which He will guide whoever follows His pleasure in the way of peace, and brings them forth from darkness into the light by His will" (5:15-16).

Chapter V

MESSENGERS

Belief in Messengers:

• We believe that Allah has sent to His people messengers who were "bringing good tidings and warning, so that mankind might have no argument against Allah after the Messengers. Allah is All-mighty, All-wise" (4: 165).

The First and Last Messengers:

• We believe that the first among the messengers is Noah and the last is Muhammad, peace be upon them all: "We revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him" (4: 163); and "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets" (33:40).

The Best Messengers:

• We believe that the best among the messengers is Muhammad, then Abraham, Moses, Noah, and Jesus, son of Mary. It is they who are meant by the following Qur'anic verse: "And when We took a compact from the prophets, and from you, and from Noah, and Abraham, then Moses, and Jesus, son of Mary. We took from them a solemn compact" (33:7).

• We believe that Muhammad's message, peace be upon him, includes all the merits of the messages of those dignified messengers, because Allah says: "He ordained for you what He enjoined on Noah and what He revealed to you and what He enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus; namely, establish this faith and be united in it" (42:13).

Messengers Are Human Beings:

• We believe that all messengers are created human beings who have none of the divine qualities of Allah. Allah, the Exalted, said about Noah, who was the first among them: "I do not say to you, 'I possess the treasures of Allah.' I do not know the unseen, and I do not say 'I am an angel'" (11:31) Allah directed Muhammad, who is the last among them, to say: "I do not say to you I possess the treasures of Allah, nor do I know the unseen, and I

do not say to you I am an angel" (6:50); and to say that "I have no power to bring profit or hurt for myself, but only as Allah wills" (7:188); and: "I have no power to hurt or benefit you. Say none can protect me from Allah, nor can I find any refuge besides Him" (72:91-2).

• We believe that the messengers are among Allah's servants. He blessed them with the message and described them as servants, in the context of praising and honoring them. He says about Noah, the first among them: "You are the descendants of those whom We carried with Noah, he was a truly thankful servant" (17:3).

• Allah said about the last among them, Muhammad, peace be upon him: "Blessed be He who sent down the Qur'an to His servant, that he may warn mankind" (25:1). As for some other messengers, he said: "And mention Our servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, men of might and vision" (38:45); "And remember Our servant David, who was a mighty and penitent man" (38: 17); "And to David, We gave Solomon, he was an excellent and penitent servant" (38:30).

• Allah said about Jesus, son of Mary: "He is only a servant whom We blessed and We made him an example to the children of Israel" (43: 59).

• We believe that Allah concluded all messages with the message of Muhammad, peace be upon him, to all people, because He said: "Say, 'O mankind, I am Allah's Messenger to you all. To him belongs the Kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth; there is no god but He. He ordains life and death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in Allah and His words. Follow him so that you may be rightly guided'" (7:158).

Islam: The Universal and Final Message:

• We believe that the Shari'ah of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is the religion of Islam, which Allah has chosen for His servants. He does not accept any other religion from anyone, for He, the Exalted, said: "Surely, the true religion in Allah's sight is Islam" (3:19), "Today I have perfected your religion for you and I have completed My favor upon you, and I have chosen Islam to be your religion" (5:3), and "Whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from Him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers" (3:85).

• It is our opinion that whoever claims that any religion other than Islam is acceptable, such as Judaism, Christianity and so forth, is a non believer. He should be asked to repent.

• It is also our opinion that whoever rejects the universal message of Muhammad, peace be upon him, rejects the message of all messengers, even if he claims that he believes and follows His Messenger. Allah, the Exalted, said: "Noah's people rejected the Messengers" (26:105). Thus, Allah considered them as rejecting all of the messengers despite the fact that there was no messenger before Noah. This is also clear from the following verses: "Those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers, and wish to make division between Allah and His Messengers, and say: 'We believe in some and disbelieve in others,' wishing to take a midway course. Those indeed are the unbelievers, and We have prepared for the unbelievers a humiliating punishment"(4:150-51).

• We believe that there is no prophet after Muhammad, Allah's Messenger, peace be upon him. Whoever claims prophet hood after him, or believes in anyone claiming it, is a disbeliever and one who rejects Allah, His Messenger, and the Muslims' consensus.

The Rightly Guided Caliphs:

• We believe that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has rightly guided successors who carried out his Sunnah in spreading knowledge calling to Islam, and managing the Muslims' affairs. We believe that the best among them and the most entitled to the caliphate was Abu Bakr as Siddiq, then 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, then 'Uthman Ibn Affan and then 'All Ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with them all. Thus their succession to the caliphate was according to their virtues. Allah, the Exalted, who possesses infinite wisdom, would not appoint a ruler over the best of generations unless he was the most superior among them and had the best claim to caliphate.

• We believe that the inferior among those rightly guided companions can be superior in a specific virtue to those who were better than him but that he does not deserve absolute superiority, for the elements constituting superiority are varied and numerous.

• We believe that the Muslim Ummah is the best among nations, and Allah, the Dignified and Exalted, has blessed it, because He said: "You are the best nation ever brought forth for mankind, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah"

The Prophet's Companions:

• We believe that the best among the Muslim Ummah are the Prophet's Companions, then their followers, and then those who followed them.

• We also believe that a group of this Ummah will always remain victorious on the right path, unharmed by those who let them down or those who oppose them, until the Day of Judgment.

• We believe that the disputes that took place among the Prophet's Companions were the result of sincere interpretations that they worked hard to reach. Whoever was right among them will be rewarded twice, and whoever was wrong among them will be rewarded once and his mistake will be forgiven.

• It is our opinion that we should stop talking about their mistakes and mention what they deserve of beautiful praise. We should purify our hearts from hatred and malice against any of them, because Allah said about them: "They are not equal: those among you who spent and who fought before the conquest of Makkah. Those are higher in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards. But to all Allah has promised a great reward" (57:10). And Allah said about us: "And those who came after them say: 'Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith, and do not put in our hearts any malice against those who have believed. Our Lord, You are the most Kind, Most Merciful'" (59:10).

Chapter VI

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

Belief in the Day of Judgment:

• We believe in the Final Day, which is the Day of Judgment, when people will be resurrected and then told to remain in the abode of enjoyment or in the abode of severe punishment.

The Resurrection:

• We believe in the resurrection, which is Allah's bringing to life all those who have died, and when Israfil shall blow the horn for the second time: "And the trumpet shall be blown, and all who are in the heavens and who are in the Earth shall fall down fainting, except those that Allah shall spare. Then, it shall be blown again and they shall rise gazing around them" (39:68). People will arise from their graves, answering the call of the Lord of the universe. They will be barefooted, naked, and uncircumcised: "As We started the first creation, so We shall bring it back again. This is a promise from Us, so We shall assuredly fulfill it" (21: 104).

The Records and Scales:

• We believe in the records of deeds that will be given to people in their right hands or behind their backs, in the left hands: "As for him who is given his book in his right hand, he shall surely receive an easy reckoning and he will return to his family rejoicing. But as for him who is given his book behind his back, he shall call for destruction on himself and will burn in a blazing fire" (84:7-12); "Every man's work We have fastened on his own neck, and on the Day of Judgment We shall bring out for him a book which he will see spread open, saying: 'Read your own book! Enough for you this day that your own soul should call you to account'" (17:13-14).

• We believe that scales of deeds will be set up on the Day of Judgment, and that no soul shall be wronged: "Whoever has done an atom's weight of good shall see it" (99:7-8); "Those whose scales are heavy, they are the successful; but those whose scales are light, they are the ones who have lost their souls in Hell dwelling forever. The fire will burn their faces, and there they will be gloomy with lips displaced" (23: 102-4); and "He that does a good deed shall be rewarded ten times the like of it, and he that does

evil shall only be rewarded the like of it, and they shall not be wronged" (6:160).

The Prophet's Intercession:

• We believe in the special great intercession of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. He will plead with Allah, after His permission and on behalf of mankind, to judge among His servants when they suffer from worries and troubles that they cannot bear. They will go to Adam, then to Noah, then to Abraham, then to Moses, then to Jesus, and finally to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

• We believe in the intercession that concerns some believers who were to be taken out from the fire. This mediation is granted to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and to others among the prophets, the believers, and the angels.

• We believe also that Allah will save from hell some of the believers without the intercession of any one, but by His grace and mercy.

The Prophet's Pool:

• We believe in the pool of the Prophet, peace be upon him, the water of which is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey and better in fragrance than musk. Each of its length and width is the distance of a month's travel. Its glasses are as stars in beauty and number. The believers among the Prophet's followers come to take from this great cistern a drink after which they will never be thirsty.

The Straight Path:

• We believe in the straight path (sirat) set up over hell. People pass over it according to their deeds: the first of them as fast as lighting, then as fast as wind, then as fast as birds, and then as fast as a running man. The Prophet will be standing on the path, saying: "Lord, Save! Save!," as some people's deeds will fall short. Some of them will come crawling. At both sides of the path there are hooks designed to take whom Allah wills: some are saved but bruised; others are thrown into hell. (Bukhari and Muslim).

• We believe in all that is mentioned in the Qur'an or the prophetic sayings concerning that day and its horrors, may Allah save us from them.

• We believe in the intercession (Shafa'ah) of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, for the people of paradise to enter therein. This intercession is exclusively limited to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Paradise and Hell:

We believe in paradise and hell. Paradise is the abode of enjoyment which Allah, the Exalted, prepared for the righteous. No eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and no human being has ever thought of the blessings that they will enjoy there: "No soul knows what comfort is kept hidden for them, as a reward for their deeds" (32:17). Hell is the abode of punishment that Allah has prepared for the unbelievers and the evildoers. The torture and horror in it cannot be imagined: "Surely, We have prepared for the evildoers a fire, whose pavilion encompasses them. If they call for help, they will be helped with water like molten copper which will scald their faces. How dreadful a drink and how evil a resting place!" (18:29).

• Both paradise and hell exist now and will never perish: "Whoever believes in Allah and does righteousness, He will admit him to gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever. Allah had indeed made for him an excellent provision" (65-11); "Certainly, Allah has cursed the unbelievers and prepared for them a blazing fire to dwell therein forever, they shall find neither protector nor helper. On the day when their faces are turned about in the fire they shall say: 'Would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger!'" (33: 64-6).

• We confirm paradise to whom it is confirmed in the Qur'an or the prophetic traditions either by name or description. Among those who are granted paradise and mentioned by name are Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'All and others who were specified by the Prophet, peace be upon him (Bukhari and Muslim). Among those whom we confirm to enter paradise because they fit the description are the faithful and the pious.

• We likewise confirm hell to whom it is confirmed in the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet, whether in name or description. Among those who are mentioned by name to be in hell are Abu Lahab, 'Amr Ibn Luhai al-Khuza'i, and others (Bukhari and Muslim). Confirmation of hell that is based on description includes every unbeliever, polytheist, or hypocrite.

What Happens in the Grave:

• We believe in the Trial of the Grave, which involves questioning the deceased person in his grave about his Lord, his religion, and his prophet. There "Allah confirms those who believe with a firm saying, in the present life and the hereafter" (14:27). The believer will say: "Allah is my Lord, Islam is my religion, and Muhammad is my prophet." The unbeliever or the hypocrite will say: "I do not know. I heard the people saying something and I said it."

• We believe in the comfort of the grave for the believers: "Those whose lives the angels take in state of purity, saying 'peace be on you; enter paradise for what you were doing' (16:32).

• We believe in the punishment of the grave for the transgressing unbelievers: "If you could only see when the evildoers are in the agonies of death and the angels are stretching out their hands, saying, 'Give up your souls! Today you shall be rewarded with the punishment of humiliation for what you used to say untrue about Allah, and for scornfully rejecting His signs'" (6:93). The sayings of the Prophet are numerous and well-known in this area. A Muslim must believe in all that is reported in the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions concerning the unseen matters. He should not contradict it by his worldly experience, because the affairs of the hereafter cannot be measured by the affairs of this life. The difference between them is very great. Allah is the source of help.

Chapter VII

FATE AND THE DIVINE DECREE

Belief:

• We believe in Fate, whether good or bad, which Allah has measured and ordained for all creatures according to His previous knowledge and as deemed suitable by His wisdom.

Levels of Belief:

• Belief in Fate has four levels:

1) Knowledge: We believe that Allah, may He be exalted, knows everything. He knows what has happened and what will happen and how it will happen. His knowledge is eternal. He does not acquire a new knowledge nor does he forget what He knows.

2) Recording: We believe that Allah has recorded in the secured tablet (al Lowh al Mahfuz) whatever is going to happen until the Day of Judgment: "Did you not know that Allah knows all that is in heaven and Earth? Surely that is in a book. Surely that for Allah is an easy matter" (22:70).

3) Will: We believe that Allah has willed everything in heaven and Earth. Nothing happens except by His will. Whatever He wills will take place, and whatever He does not will not take place.

4) Creation: We believe that "Allah is the Creator of all things; He is the Guardian over all things, and to Him belong the keys of the heavens and the Earth" (39:62-3). This level includes whatever Allah Himself does and whatever His creatures do. Thus each saying, deed, or omission of the people is known to Allah, Who has recorded, willed, and created them: "To those among you who will to be upright. But you shall not will except as Allah wills, the Lord of the Worlds" (81:2829); "And had Allah willed they would not have fought one against the other; but Allah does whatever He desires" (2:253); "Had Allah willed, they would not have done so, but leave them alone and their false inventions" (6:137); and "And Allah created you and what you do" (37:96).

Man's Free Will:

• We believe, however, that Allah has granted man a power and a free will by which he performs his actions. That man's deeds are done by his power and free will can be proven by the following points:

1) Allah says: "So approach your fields (wives) when and how you will" (2:223); and "Had they desired to go forth, they would have made some preparation for it" (9:46). In these verses, Allah affirmed for man "a going forth" by his will and "a preparation" by his desire.

2) Directing man to do or not to do. If man has no free will and power, these directions mean that Allah is asking man to do that which he cannot do. This proposition is rejected by Allah's wisdom, mercy and truthful statement: "Allah does not charge a soul beyond its capacity" (2:286).

3) Praising the virtuous for his deeds and blaming the evildoer for his actions and rewarding each of them with what he deserves. If the action is not done by the individual's free will, then praising the virtuous is a joke and punishing the evildoer is an injustice, and Allah is, of course, far from joking and being unjust.

4) Allah has sent messengers who are "bearing good tidings, and warning, so that mankind might have no argument against Allah after the messengers" (4:165). If the individual's action is not performed by his free will, his argument is not invalidated by the sending of messengers.

5) Every doer of actions feels that he does or does not do a thing without any coercion. He stands up and sits, comes in and goes out, travels and stays by his own free will without feeling anybody forcing him to be any of these actions. In fact, he clearly distinguishes between doing something of his own free will and someone else forcing him to do that action. The Islamic law also wisely distinguishes between these states of affairs. It does not punish a wrongdoer for an action done under compulsion.

No Excuse for Sinners:

• We believe that the sinner has no excuse in Allah's divine decree, because he commits his sin by his free will, without knowing that Allah has decreed for him, for no one knows Allah's decree before it takes place: "No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow" (31:34). How can it be possible, then, to present an excuse that is not known to the person who is advancing it when he commits his offense? Allah invalidated this type of argument by

saying: "The idolaters will say 'Had Allah willed, we would not have been idolaters, neither our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything.' So did the people before them cry lies until they tasted our might. Say: 'Have you any proofs that you can show us? You follow nothing but assumption, and you are Lying'" (6:148). We say to the sinner who is using divine decree as an excuse: 'Why did you not perform deeds of obedience, assuming that Allah has decreed them upon you, since you did not know the difference between good deeds and sins? That is why, when Prophet Muhammad told his Companions that everyone's position in paradise or hell has been assigned, they said: 'Should not we rely on this and stop working?' He said: 'No, work and everyone will be directed to what he is created for'" (Bukhari and Muslim).

• We say to the sinner who is trying to find an excuse in the divine decree: "Suppose you want to travel to Makkah. There are two roads that may take you there. You are told by a truthful person that one of these roads is dangerous and difficult, the other is easy and safe. You will take the second one. You will not take the first road and say it is decreed upon me. If you did, people would consider you crazy."

• We may also say to him: "If you are offered two jobs, one of which has a higher salary, you will certainly take the one with the higher salary. Why do you choose what is lower in the hereafter and use the divine decree as an excuse?"

• We may further say to him: "We see you when you are afflicted with a disease, you knock at every physician's door looking for treatment and bearing whatever pain that may result from surgical operations and the bitterness of medicine. Why do not you do the same when your heart is spiritually sick with sins?"

Evil Not Attributed to Allah:

• We believe that evil should not be attributed to Allah, due to His perfect mercy and wisdom. The Prophet said: "And evil is not attributable to You" (Muslim). Thus Allah's decree by itself has no evil whatsoever, because it is coming from mercy and wisdom. Evil may, however, result from some of His decrees, because the Prophet said in the supplication for gunut which he taught to al-Hasan: "And protect us from the evil of what You decreed" (Tirmidhi and others). Here, the Prophet attributed evil to what He decreed. Despite this, evil in His decree is not pure evil. It is rather evil in one respect and good in another, or it is evil in one case and good in another. Thus corruption in the land resulting from drought, disease,

poverty, and fear is evil, but it is good in another respect. Allah, the Exalted said: "Corruption has appeared on the land and sea for what men's hands have earned. Allah has ordained this for men, so that they may taste

some of what they have done, in order that they may turn back (from evil)" (30:41). Cutting off the thief's hand or stoning the adulterer is an evil thing for the thief and the adulterer, but it is good for them in one respect, because it is a purification for them so that the punishment of this life and the hereafter are not combined for them. These punishments are good in another respect: their application protects property, honor, and relationships.

Chapter VIII

BENEFITS

This sublime belief, which includes those great principles, bears numerous and useful types of fruits for whoever believes in it.

Virtues of Belief in Allah:

• Belief in Allah, His names, and His attributes instills in the individual the love and glorification of Allah that result in his performing Allah's instructions and avoiding His prohibitions. These are the means of achieving ultimate happiness in this life and the hereafter for both the individual and the society: "Whoever, male or female, does righteous deed, while believing, We shall assuredly grant him a goodly life, and We shall reward them according to the best of their deeds" (16:97).

Virtues of Belief in the Angels:

• Appreciating the dignity of Allah, His might, and His sovereignty.

• Gratitude toward Allah because He puts some of the angels in charge of His servants, recording their deeds and other things that benefit them.

• Love and admiration for the angels because of what they are doing, namely, worshipping Allah in the best possible manner and praying for the believers.

Virtues of Belief in the Books:

• Appreciating Allah's mercy and care for His people in that He sent down a book to every nation for its guidance.

• Appreciating Allah's wisdom, for He revealed in these books to every nation that which suits them. The glorious Qur'an is the final book and it is suitable to all people at all times until the Day of Judgment.

• Showing gratitude for Allah's mercy in revealing these books.

Virtues of Belief in the Messengers:

• Appreciating Allah's mercy and care for His people for sending them those great messengers to guide them to the straight path. Thanking Allah for this great favor.

• Loving and respecting the prophets and praising them in what they deserve, because they are Allah's messengers and His choice among His people. They worshipped Allah according to the best of their ability, conveyed His message to mankind, gave sincere advice to the people, and bore patiently whatever hurt they received.

Virtues of Belief in the Day of Judgment:

• Endeavor to obey Allah to get the reward of that day and to avoid any disobedience to him for fear of His punishment.

• A consolation for the believer for whatever he misses of worldly enjoyment by what he hopes to gain of blessings and reward of the hereafter.

Virtues of Belief in Fate and the Divine Decree:

• Dependence on Allah when doing any action, because both the cause and effect are the result of Allah's decree.

• Ease of mind and comfort, because when the individual knows that everything is by Allah's decree and that mishaps are going to take place anyway, his soul will be at ease and his heart will be satisfied with Allah's decree. No one has a more comfortable life, worry-free soul, and stronger confidence than a believer in fate.

• Freedom from arrogance when a goal is achieved, because this is a blessing from Allah through what He decreed of the causes of good and success. The individual should thank Allah for that and free himself from arrogance.

• Freedom from worry and boredom in case of failure or mishap, because that is by Allah's decree, the One who possesses the heavens and the Earth. Since that is going to happen anyway, the individual should be patient and hope for the reward from Allah. Allah points to the last two virtues in the following verse: "No misfortune can happen on earth or in yourselves but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence, that is really easy

for Allah; that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor rejoice in what has come to you. Allah does not love any vainglorious boaster" (57:22-3).

We pray to Allah, the Exalted, to reward us for this belief, to realize for us its fruits, to increase our blessings, to keep us on the right path to which He has guided us, and to bestow on us a blessing from Him. He is indeed the Giver. Praise and gratitude be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be on Prophet Muhammad, his family, his Companions, and those who rightly follow them.